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DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS TO THE COURT OF CHINA

THE KOTOW QUESTION.

II.

THOUGH the Russian mission to Peking of 1654 was a failure, no evil ensued, and trade between the two nations along their frontiers continued as in the past. When negotiating with China the treaty of Nipchu in 1689, the Russians demanded that should one country send ambassadors to the other to communicate the leading events in the two empires, these ambassadors should be treated with every honor, that they should hand the letters of their masters *into the hands* of the emperor to whom they were sent, and that they should have entire liberty in whatever place they might be, even at court. To this the Chinese plenipotentiaries returned an evasive answer, saying that envoys would always be received with distinction, but that it was, of course, quite beyond the limits of their authority to pledge the emperor to any alteration in the ceremonials of his court.¹

Ysbrandt Ides was the first envoy sent by Russia to the court of China after the conclusion of this treaty. He came there in 1692 and has left an interesting narrative of his journey, but tells us nothing of his audience with the Emperor K'ang-hsi.

In 1719 Peter the Great sent to China another envoy, Count Leoff Ismailoff, two accounts of whose journey have reached us, the one by Father Ripa, one of the Jesuits of Peking, the other by an Englishman, John Bell of Antermomy, a member of the embassy.²

On the 29th of November, 1720, Count Ismailoff made his public entry into Peking, with a retinue of ninety persons and to the sound of military music. A guard of five hundred Chinese soldiers cleared the way. A Russian officer, "well composed and accoutered" to impress the Chinese mind with the envoy's importance, and with drawn sword, opened the procession; then followed soldiers and a kettle-drummer, a number of servants and after them the count on horseback. On one side of him walked a man of gigantic stature and on the other a dwarf, while the gentlemen of the embassy, sec-

¹See Du Halde, *Description*, etc., IV. 197.

²See *Memoirs of Father Ripa during Thirteen Years' Residence at the Court of Peking*, etc. (F. Prandi's translation), p. 115 *et seq.*, and John Bell, *A Journey from St. Petersburg in Russia to Peking in China*, p. 264 *et seq.*

retaries and servants brought up the rear, some on horseback, others on foot. They were lodged in the compound of the ecclesiastical mission, at present the Russian legation, and the outer court door was locked and sealed by the Chinese with the emperor's seal.

While the envoy was engaged in conversation on the day of his arrival with commissioners appointed to conduct negotiations with him, and among whom were several Jesuit missionaries, the dinner, consisting of fruits, confections and a piece of excellent mutton, sent him by the emperor, was brought in, and the commissioners requested the count to return thanks by making the accustomed prostrations. Ismailoff refused, alleging that he represented his sovereign, who was on equal terms with the emperor. He consented, however, to make an obeisance according to the custom of his own country, and with this the commissioners were forced to be satisfied.

All this was, of course, at once reported to the emperor, who thought to elude the difficulty by first inviting the envoy to a private audience. The count said he would accept it if he could present his credentials; he furthermore stated that when presenting them he would not make the prostration, but only the obeisance which European ambassadors made before the princes to whom they were sent. He also said that he must place the letter in the emperor's own hands, and not, according to Chinese custom, upon a table whence it was taken by a great officer of state and presented to His Majesty.¹ This was, of course, refused. When various other suggestions had been made to Ismailoff by messengers from the emperor as to how he might present his letter of credence, and all had been put aside by the ambassador as beneath the dignity of his high station, His Majesty, perceiving that he firmly persisted in his resolution, declared through his messengers that whenever he should send an ambassador to the czar he would stand uncovered before him, although in China none but condemned criminals exposed their heads bare, and should perform all the other ceremonies customary at Moscow. No sooner had they arrived at these words than the chief mandarin instantly took off his cap before the ambassador, and the latter, being thus satisfied, promised to perform the prostrations according to Chinese custom,² and also to place the

¹ At the present day this is the only point which the Chinese have not conceded. The letters of foreign sovereigns are still placed on a table, but *within reach* of the emperor.

² One of the Jesuits residing at Peking at the time says that the emperor ordered a high officer to perform before the letter of the czar the same prostrations the Russian envoy would have to make before him; after which the Russian did not hesitate to go through the prescribed ceremony of kotowing. See *Lettres Édifiantes et Curieuses*, III. 308.

letter upon the table in sight of the emperor sitting on his throne, so that one of the courtiers might afterward convey it to His Majesty.¹ The mandarin further stated that the ambassador had the imperial permission to repair to the gate of the palace in the same state in which he had entered Peking.

The audience took place on the 9th of December, at a place about six miles westward from Peking,² whither the ambassador and his suite repaired on horseback. After Count Ismailoff and the ninety men of his suite had been kept waiting, first for half an hour or so in a small building where they drank tea, and then in silence for a long while in the open vestibule of the great audience-hall, the emperor arrived, and took his seat on his throne of carved wood, raised five steps above the floor of the hall. He sat cross-legged; on his right were three of his sons seated upon cushions, and, a little further off, halberdiers, pages, eunuchs, his chief courtiers and some of the Jesuits, all standing. The emperor was dressed in a yellow tunic over which was a sable jacket. On his head was a small cap, the top of which was a large pearl, the only ornament he wore. At the foot of the throne, on the floor of the great hall, sat, upon cushions, in distinct rows, the first mandarins of the empire, the Kung-yeh, or dukes or lords of the imperial family, and many other mandarins of inferior rank. Before the throne, near the entrance of the great hall, stood a table prepared with sweetmeats, for His Majesty.³ In the open vestibule, which was seven steps lower than the great hall, was another table, beyond which Count Ismailoff was made to stand. According to Chinese etiquette, the ambassador should have placed the letter upon this table, kneeling down in the vestibule; but the emperor ordered that the table should be brought into the audience-hall, and that the ambassador should also advance, which was a mark of honor.

Count Ismailoff then entered, and immediately prostrated himself before the table, holding up the czar's letter with both hands. The emperor, who had at first behaved graciously to the envoy, now thought proper to mortify him by making him remain some time in

¹ Bell's account differs somewhat from that given above, which is taken from Father Ripa's narrative.

² Bell's dates are in Russian style, twelve days earlier. Ismailoff was received in audience at Yuan-ming-yuan, the Summer Palace, a few miles west of Peking. Father Ripa transcribes the name of the palace where the emperor was then residing, Chan-choon-yuen.

³ The emperor K'ang-hsi, who reigned from 1662 to 1723. Gemelli Carreri, who saw him in 1695, says of him that he was "of stature proportionable, his countenance comely, his eyes sparkling, and somewhat larger than generally his countrymen have them; somewhat hawk-nosed, and a little round at the point; he has some marks of the small-pox, yet they do not at all lessen the beauty of his countenance." *Voyages round the World*, Pt. IV., Bk. II., ch. I. (Churchill's Collection, IV. 304).

this particular posture.¹ The proud Russian was indignant at this treatment and gave unequivocal signs of resentment by certain motions of his mouth and by turning his head aside, which, under the circumstances, was very unseemly. Hereupon His Majesty prudently requested that the ambassador himself should bring the letter up to him, and, when Count Ismailoff did so, kneeling at his feet, he received it at his own hands, thus giving him another mark of regard, and granting what he had previously refused.

After the presentation of the letter the ambassador, attended by the master of the ceremonies, returned to his former place in the open vestibule, but shortly after moved to the centre opposite the chair in which the emperor was seated. Behind the emperor stood his principal attendants, and further back a number of soldiers and servants.² When all present were thus marshalled in due order, at particular signals given by the master-in-chief of the ceremonies, they all went down on their knees, and, after the lapse of a few minutes, bent their heads thrice to the ground. After this all arose upon their feet, then again kneeled and prostrated themselves three times. In this manner they kneeled thrice, and performed nine prostrations, which ceremony is known as *san kuci chiu k'ou*, "the three kneelings and the nine head-knockings."

The ambassador was then conducted to the emperor's feet, and was asked by His Majesty what request he had to make. Count Ismailoff answered that the czar had sent him to inquire after the health of His Majesty, and to confirm the friendly relations that existed between them. To these inquiries the emperor replied in a very courteous manner; and then added that it being feast day, it would not be proper to discuss business, for which an audience would be granted at another opportunity. The ambassador was then allowed to sit down on a low cushion at the end of the row in which were the Kung-yeh, or dukes, and four of his principal attendants were placed behind him at the extremity of the next row, and the imperial banquet began, the emperor handing Ismailoff with his own hands some wine in a gold cup. After this a table of sweet-

¹ Bell (*op. cit.*, 272, 273) does not refer to this little incident. He says on the contrary that just as the count was about to place his credentials on a table in the hall near the door, the emperor beckoned for him to approach, and Ismailoff walked up to the throne, and kneeling, laid them before the emperor, who touched them with his hand. After this the ambassador was led back to the entrance to the hall, and there he and his suite performed the koto.

² Bell (p. 273) says he pronounced the Tartar words *morgu* and *boss*, the first meaning to bow, and the other to stand; "two words which I cannot soon forget." Conf. Gemelli Carreri's account of the ceremonial in the times of the emperor K'ang-hsi, where he gives the correct *Chinese* expression used by the master of ceremonies on such occasions. Gemelli Carreri, *loc. sup. cit.*

meats was conveyed to the ambassador, and then another upon which were dishes from the emperor's own table, among others some boiled pheasants. There was music and dancing during the whole time of the banquet, and various other amusements, and it was nearly night before the emperor retired, and the Russians left without further formality, "so well satisfied with the gracious and friendly reception of the emperor that all their former hardships were almost forgot."¹

A Portuguese mission under Alexander Metello Souza Menezes reached Peking in May, 1727, and an interesting account of the discussion preceding its reception by the emperor is found in a letter of Father Parrennin, one of the Peking Jesuits, to his friend, Father Nyel.² Metello, when received by the emperor, placed *in his hands* the letter of the king of Portugal, John V., congratulating him on his accession, and then withdrew to the front part of the audience-hall, where he and his suite performed the three kneelings and nine head-knockings. After this he was given a cushion nearer the throne than that of any officials present. Here he, kneeling, made his address to the emperor, and on the whole comported himself with "such grace and courtliness" that the emperor said of him: "This man is agreeable and polished," and every two days thereafter he had dishes sent to him from his own table. The 7th of July Metello took his leave of the emperor at the Summer Palace and returned to Macao.

From 1684, or thereabout, when the British first gained a footing in China, until the end of the eighteenth century no endeavor was made by them to open direct diplomatic intercourse with the court of Peking, but in 1788 it was deemed advisable to send an embassy there to put, if possible, the relations between the two countries on some kind of regular and dignified footing. Col. Cathcart was then appointed minister to the court of Peking, but as he died while on his way to his post, the mission was deferred until 1792, when the Earl of Macartney was chosen ambassador, and in the latter part of July, 1793, he arrived off Taku bar at the mouth of the Peiho. Here he, his numerous suite, guards, musicians, etc., and the presents destined for the emperor were embarked on board native boats and taken with great pomp and ceremony to Tien-tsin. Lord Macartney was there told that the emperor would receive him at Jehol, outside the Great Wall, where he had gone to celebrate his sixtieth birthday, so he sailed on up the Peiho to Tung-chou, while, over the boats that bore him, gaily floated in the breeze Chinese

¹ Bell, *op. sup. cit.*, p. 277.

² *Lettres Édifiantes et Curieuses*, III. 548-55.

flags bearing in large characters "Ambassadors bearing tribute from the country of England."

From Tung-chou the embassy traveled to Peking, which it entered by the Chao-yang men, or eastern gate in the Tartar city, and passing round the palace and out by the western side of the Tartar city stopped in a village near the Summer Palace. It was decided by the Chinese that the presents destined for the emperor should be displayed in the audience-hall of the Summer Palace, and Lord Macartney was asked to prostrate himself before the throne, as the Dutch and other foreign envoys had done before him.

The ambassador agreed not only to perform the prostration, but also to conform to every exterior ceremony practised by His Imperial Majesty's subjects, and the tributary princes attending at his court, if a subject of His Imperial Majesty, of equal rank to his own, should perform, before the picture he had with him of His Majesty King George III., dressed in his robes of state, the same ceremonies that the ambassador should be directed to perform before the Chinese throne.

This proposition was forwarded to the emperor for his approval, but without waiting for an answer the ambassador set out for Jehol in his post-chaise accompanied by some members of his suite. On his arrival there the Chinese opened the audience question and, ignoring the propositions made previously by Lord Macartney, pressed him to perform the *kotow*, saying that it was a simple, unmeaning ceremony. They were willing to have some slight alterations made in the ceremonial so that it should not be exactly the same as that performed by the envoys of Korea, Liu-chiu and other vassal states; but Lord Macartney would only agree to bend upon one knee before the emperor, as he did before his king. According to the British official narratives of the mission this was accepted by the emperor, and the audience took place shortly after in a tent in the palace gardens, where the ambassador was kept from before dawn awaiting the emperor's arrival.

There is a strong suspicion in the minds of many that Lord Macartney made the detested prostrations. Æneas Anderson, a member of the embassy, but who, it is true, was not present at the audience, says that the ceremonial followed was kept a profound secret by those who witnessed it, and intimates that something that had to be concealed then happened.¹ The Chinese on their side emphatically assert that Lord Macartney kotowed.² Furthermore the Russian interpreter, Vladyskin, who was in Peking at the time, and other

¹ Æneas Anderson, *Narrative of the British Embassy to China in 1792-93*, p. 193.

² Henry Ellis, *Journal of the Proceedings of Lord Amherst's Embassy to China*, 92.

persons who must have had good opportunities for ascertaining the facts, state that the British ambassador did perform the three kneelings and nine head-knockings.¹

However this may be, Lord Macartney left Jehol after a few days and returned to Peking, where he was given the emperor's very haughty and highly unsatisfactory answer to King George's letter, and a broad hint to leave as soon as possible was conveyed to him by the privy council, which had shown itself throughout most unfriendly and often discourteous. With this the embassy hurried away and re-embarked on the ship awaiting it off Taku.²

I shall only refer briefly to the Dutch mission to Peking in 1794, under Titzing of the council of Batavia and Van Braam, chief of the Dutch factory at Canton, which was sent with the ostensible purpose of congratulating the emperor, Ch'ien-lung, on his sixtieth birthday. It traveled overland from Canton, hurried along most of the way in carts (sedan chairs were refused the envoys), and reached Peking on a cold winter night in January, 1795.

After passing a miserable night in a filthy inn outside the gates of the Tartar city, without even anything to eat, the embassy was driven by a circuitous route around the imperial city, and lodged in some dirty little buildings, not far to the west from where now stands the British Legation, possibly in some one of the little inns in the Nei Kuan now used and probably then used by Mongols on their winter visits to the capital.

The morning after their arrival an official with a red coral button and a peacock feather in his hat brought the ambassadors a large sturgeon sent them from the palace, and the envoys received the gift in the courtyard, kneeling and knocking their heads on the ground. They were told that the emperor would receive them the next day, and that they must not fail to powder their hair and to be ready by three o'clock in the morning. They were driven off in carts and reached the palace by five o'clock. Coming to the west side of the imperial city, near where now stands the Pei-t'ang Catholic cathedral, they waited, first in one then in another of the little guard-houses near the gate, laughed at and stared at by the noisy, dirty crowd. At last day broke; they were led into the imperial city, across the marble bridge, and then ordered to kneel by the side of the road in company with some Korean envoys and a lot of Mongols, there to await the passage of the emperor, who was shortly to pass by on his way to one of the pavilions along the northwest shore of the Northern Lake.

¹Abel Rémusat, *Mélanges Asiatiques*, I. 450-441. Also, Barry E. O'Meara, *Napoleon in Exile*, II. III.

²See Sir George Staunton, *An Historical Account of the Embassy to the Emperor of China*, pp. 250-383.

When the imperial cortège reached the Dutch, their letters of credence were taken from them while they prostrated themselves before the emperor seated in his yellow sedan-chair. The emperor stopped a minute, and learning who these strange, powder-headed creatures were, asked the age of their prince and if he were in good health, and then passed on.

The Dutch were then led into the gardens surrounding the frozen lake and into a pavilion near that in which the emperor was breakfasting. Here some food was given them, and they again prostrated themselves before these gifts from the emperor's table. After this they were taken back into the park to witness the Chinese skating, and to see the emperor in his sleigh, and they showed their proficiency in the art of skating, much to the delight of the coolies, soldiers and palace servants. When the emperor, a little later, returned to his palace the Dutch appear to have been led into the Forbidden City, where they were received by Ho Chung-t'ang, one of the members of the Inner Council, probably, before whom they also kneeled and then remained standing all the while he addressed them.

During the rest of their sojourn at Peking the Dutch were treated as freaks of nature, to be stared at and to afford amusement for the crowd. They were even led to the palace to be looked at by the women; they were refused permission to see any of the missionaries; they were half starved and frozen; they had to be at the palace every day, and were made to prostrate themselves so often and before so many persons that they were on the point of rebelling. Finally the presents from the stadtholder were delivered, and return presents and a letter sent by the emperor given them; and after having been in Peking forty days, they left it again on the 14th of February, apparently much sadder but wiser men.¹

In 1805 the Russian government sent, at the request of that of China, an embassy to the court of Peking. It was organized on a most brilliant scale, and was led by Count Golovkin. In the middle of January, 1806, the envoy reached Urga, where discussions as to the ceremonies to be followed at the imperial audience began. Golovkin refused to *kotow*, alleging that Lord Macartney had not done so. The question was referred to Peking, and the embassy had to await the imperial commands; but in the meantime the governor of northern Mongolia received orders to give the count an imperial banquet before the imperial throne, and here the ambassador was requested to *kotow* before a screen and a yellow-covered table which figured the emperor. Golovkin refused, the banquet was not

¹ De Guignes, *Voyage à Peking, Manille et l'Ile de France*, I. 357-439.

given, and on the 10th of February orders came from Peking dismissing him, and he promptly set off for Russia again.¹

In the year 1815 the increasing difficulties which the British at Canton were continually experiencing as a result of the oppressions of the local government, and also the absence of trade regulations, induced the Court of Directors of the East India Company to submit to the home government a proposition recommending the sending of an embassy to Peking. One of the chief grievances of the British against the Chinese was their resenting the seizure in their territorial waters of several American ships by the commander of H. B. M. ship *Doris*, and their visiting their displeasure on the Company's people at Canton. In 1816 Lord Amherst was appointed ambassador to China, and in the latter part of July of the same year he arrived off Taku, on his way to Peking. Here some officials of low degree met him, and a few days after the ambassador and his suite of fifty-four persons set out for Tien-tsin in native boats.

Lord Amherst now began to show signs of perplexity; was he to kotow or should he refuse? He consulted the officers of his suite and found them divided on the subject, Mr. Morrison his interpreter and Mr. Ellis being in favor of his complying with the Chinese request, while Sir George Staunton held its performance incompatible with personal and national dignity.²

Some preliminary discussion about kotowing took place between Lord Amherst and a Tartar official, styled Kuang Chin-chai, deputed from Peking to meet the embassy on the occasion of an imperial banquet, given in all likelihood at the Hai-kuang ssü near Tien-tsin. This official said the ceremonial required would be the same as that observed in Lord Macartney's case, implying, of course, that the kotow would be expected. Amherst replied that he would follow in every respect the precedent established by the former British ambassador, meaning of course that he would only bend the knee. Then the Chinese declared in the most emphatic manner that Lord Macartney had kotowed whenever asked. Lord Amherst's expressions of anxiety to show the emperor the same marks of veneration as he would His Britannic Majesty did not pacify them, and they freely stated their belief that the embassy would not be received by the emperor. Finally, the kotow was dispensed with for this occasion only, and the Chinese were satisfied with Lord Amherst's bowing nine times before the imperial table, and agreeing, on his reception by the emperor, to kneel upon

¹ G. Timkowski, *Voyage à Peking*, I. 133-136.

² See Henry Ellis, *Journal of the Proceedings of Lord Amherst's Embassy to China*, pp. 78, 109, 152, 153, 171.

one knee and make his obeisance in that posture, and to repeat this nine times in succession.

On the 14th of August the embassy left for Tung-chou in boats. On the way up it had several squabbles with the officials escorting it. The emperor forbade Lord Amherst's orchestra to accompany him to Peking, and insisted on the kotow, asserting that Lord Macartney had performed it. The presents were also refused and the embassy ordered back unless the obnoxious prostration was gone through with. Lord Amherst tried Lord Macartney's suggestion that he would kotow if a Tartar of equal rank with him did so before the portrait of the Prince Regent, or, if this proposition was unacceptable, he would kotow, if the emperor issued a decree stating that any Chinese ambassador who might hereafter be presented at the British court should perform the kotow before His British Majesty. Both suggestions were refused; the officials to whom they were made would not even submit them to the emperor, whose ultimatum was—kotow or no audience.

Lord Amherst turned back, dropped down the river and anchored at Tsai-tsung, a little town on the Peiho. Here after a while further orders reached him from the emperor directing him to Tung-chou, there to discuss again the audience question with newly appointed envoys and go through a rehearsal of the ceremony originally agreed upon at Tien-tsin.

On the 20th of August the embassy reached Tung-chou, where once more the ceremonial question was discussed, the Chinese showing themselves haughty, insolent and unbending in their demands. Lord Amherst appears to have been on the verge of ceding, rather than to see his embassy fail, and Ellis expressed the view that the national respectability would not suffer thereby, and that the difference between nine prostrations of the head to the ground upon two knees, and nine profound bows upon one knee, was after all very slight.¹ Sir George Staunton, however strenuously opposed this view, and finally Lord Amherst informed the Chinese commissioners that his decision was irrevocable, and that he would not kotow.

The embassy remained at Tung-chou a week, when suddenly orders came for Lord Amherst to go at once to the village of Hai-tien, near the Summer Palace, at which latter place the emperor had decided to receive him. Here he arrived on the 29th of August, after having been taken around Peking instead of through the city. He was without a moment's delay led to the Summer Palace and told that the emperor would at once receive him. Amherst said he could not appear in his present state of fatigue, inanition, and defi-

¹ Henry Ellis, *op. sup. cit.*, p. 152.

ciency of every necessary equipment, not to mention the fact that he had not his credentials with him. He boldly refused to cede to anything but violence, saying that he was so overcome by fatigue and bodily illness, as absolutely to require repose.

The emperor, it is said, at first accepted his excuses, and sent his own surgeon to attend him, and the ambassador returned to Hai-tien ; but hardly had he arrived there when orders dismissing him came from the emperor, who had apparently become in the meanwhile incensed at Amherst's refusal to attend him according to his commands. It would seem that the surgeon reported that Amherst was shamming illness, and that this had caused the emperor to order the instant dismissal of the mission.

Lord Amherst left the same day for Tung-chou where he received some presents for the Prince Regent from the emperor ; and the pictures of the king and queen of England, some maps and colored prints were sent him back in return. On the 2d of September the embassy started for Tien-tsin, and thence down the grand canal to the Yang-tzū river which was entered on the 19th of October, and then by way of Nan-king to Canton, which was reached on the 1st of January, 1817, and here the ships which had brought it the year before to Taku were in waiting to take it back to England.

Lord Amherst's conduct of his mission gave rise to much discussion in Europe ; I will not give the many arguments advanced for or against his refusal to perform the kotow. I cannot forbear, however, quoting the opinion of Napoleon I. as given by O'Meara :¹ "The emperor of China had a right to require the *ko-tou*. It is an extraordinary presumption for you to attempt to regulate the etiquette of the palace of Peking by that of St. James ; the simple principle which has been laid down, that in negotiation as well as in etiquette, the ambassador does not represent the sovereign, and has only a right to experience the same treatment as the highest grandee of the place, clears up the whole of the question, and remedies every difficulty. Russia and England should instruct their ambassadors to submit to the *ko-tou*, upon the sole condition that the Chinese ambassador should submit in London and Petersburg to such forms of etiquette as are prescribed for the princes and grandees. In paying respect to the customs of a country, you make those of your own more sacred ; and every homage which is rendered to a great foreign sovereign in the forms which are in use in his own country, is becoming and honorable. Every sensible man in your country therefore can consider the refusal to perform the *ko-tou* not otherwise than as unjustifiable and unfortunate in its consequences."

¹ Barry E. O'Meara, *op. sup. cit.*, II. 112-114.

In 1858 Mr. John E. Ward was appointed minister of the United States to China and instructed to proceed to Peking, there to deliver to the Emperor Hsien-feng a letter of the president, and effect the exchange of the ratified copies of the treaty signed in June of the same year at Tien-tsin by our first minister to China, Mr. W. B. Reed.

Mr. Ward left Shanghai in June, 1859, on the U. S. ship *Powhatan* and in due course reached the village of Pei-t'ang, to the north of the mouth of the Peiho river. Here he landed and was taken to Peking, part of the way in carts and part in boats; but over the carts and boats floated an ominous little yellow pennant with the words "Tribute bearers from the United States."

On the 28th of June the mission entered Peking. The imperial commissioners appointed to confer with the minister were the same who had the year before signed the treaty with Mr. Reed, and who were a year later to play such an important rôle with the British and French plenipotentiaries. They insisted that the treaty could only be exchanged after an audience of the emperor, but they were pleased to admit that, as the United States were neither a vassal nor a tributary state like Korea, Liu-chiu or Annam, their envoy could not be expected to perform the three kneelings and nine head-knockings, and that the emperor would be satisfied with one kneeling and three head-knockings.

Mr. Ward replied, like the Arab envoys to the Chinese emperor in the eighth century, that he knelt to God only, and furthermore he cared nothing for an audience which he had not sought. One of the Chinese commissioners then adduced an argument which had done service in the case of Lord Amherst, and which was to be brought forward again in 1873. "Our sovereigns are of equal rank, and so are you and we, their ministers. Now, we kneel before the emperor, so you should do likewise, for if you do not you raise yourself above us." According to Napoleon's theories, this argument was unanswerable, but Ward refused to consider it so, and insisted that he would only bow to the emperor in the same way as he would to the president of the United States. He also asked the commissioners if they would prostrate themselves before a foreign potentate, to which they promptly replied that they would be ready not only to knock their heads on the ground, but that, if required to, they would burn incense before him as they do before their gods.

Finally a compromise was agreed upon which, it was thought, would meet with the emperor's approval. Ward was to approach the throne and bow as low as he would to the president of the

United States, when chamberlains would run forward to him on either side crying out, "Don't kneel!" Those of his suite presented with him would go through the same ceremony, after which he would respectfully place the letter of the president on a table so surrounded with embroideries as to conceal most of his person from the emperor, who would not be able to see whether he was kneeling or standing. After this the letter would be taken by a courtier who would present it, kneeling, to the emperor.

The emperor, however, proved obdurate. His reply was that, unless Mr. Ward actually touched one knee or the ends of his fingers to the ground, he would not receive him. Of course this was refused, and a few days later the letter of the president was delivered to the commissioners, who had been ordered in the meanwhile by the emperor to receive it. The exchange of ratifications was effected in an unceremonious way at Pei-t'ang, where Ward embarked again on the 17th of August for Shanghai.¹

With Ward's failure the first portion of this long-fought battle came to an end. In it the Chinese had scored victories over the Arabs, Russians, Dutch, Portuguese, British and Americans, and in the middle of the nineteenth century the western world had no reason to believe that China would ever depart from its successfully enforced demand that foreign envoys should prostrate themselves before the emperor in compliance with the immemorial custom of the country and of Asia generally.

But even the Chinese world moves, and so it happened that when once again the audience question was brought under discussion, the relations of China with the powers of the West had undergone such changes, that it was no longer possible for it to withstand the pressure of public opinion and to ignore the necessity of conciliating the despised Western Barbarians, and so in the narrative of the second half of this great fight we have only to chronicle China's defeats.

The audience question, about which nothing had been heard since foreign diplomatic representatives were first allowed to reside in Peking in 1860, but for which they had been quietly preparing, was brought to the front in the commencement of 1873, when the emperor Tung-Chih reached his majority. The foreign ministers at Peking, as soon as they had been advised of his assumption of personal control of the empire, asked to be allowed to present to him their congratulations and the letters accrediting them to his

¹ S. Wells Williams, *Journ. North China Branch, Roy. Asiat. Soc.*, No. 3, pp. 315-342. Id., *The Middle Kingdom*, II. 668-670. Also *Correspondence and Despatches of the U. S. Ministers to China, 1857-1859*, p. 575 *et seq.*, and W. A. P. Martin, *A Cycle of Cathay*, 190 *et seq.*

court. Ministers of the newly created Foreign Office (Tsung-li Yamên) raised no very serious objections to the granting of the audience, provided the forms and ceremonies customary among the Chinese upon such occasions, among which that of kotowing was the most important, were complied with. They contended, as had been so frequently done before, that none but equals of the emperor could be allowed to stand in his presence; that he had no equals but the actual heads of foreign governments; that while the diplomatic representatives of these governments acted for their sovereigns, they were not possessed of the same power and could not, therefore, be considered equals in rank. One might think they had taken their arguments from Dr. O'Meara's book, and that Napoleon I. was fighting their battle. The foreign ministers signified that the fact of kneeling before the emperor would imply that their countries were inferior to China, that it would be offensive to the dignity of their governments and debasing to themselves; but they were promptly answered that in past times the envoys of the emperor of Russia had not hesitated to comply with this custom. The Chinese also insisted that if the foreign ministers knelt before the emperor they did nothing more than was required of the princes of the blood, and that should they remain standing, these latter would appear the inferiors of the foreigners. The real difficulty appears to have been the fear in which the Chinese ministers stood of the emperor, and their disinclination to represent to him the exact condition of things, which would show the altered condition of Chinese relations with foreign governments since the conclusion of the treaty with Great Britain in 1858.¹ However, after four months of contention, it was finally agreed that the ministers then present at Peking should be received by the emperor on the 29th of June (1873).

I take from despatches addressed by the United States minister, Mr. Frederick F. Low, to the secretary of state, and from memoranda accompanying them, the following facts concerning this audience, which he rightly regarded as marking a new departure in the relations of foreign nations with China.

¹ Tseng Kou-fan realized in 1868 how impossible it was in the altered condition of the relations between China and Western powers, for the emperor to insist on compliance with Chinese etiquette by foreign representatives at the court of Peking. In his famous secret memorial to the emperor Tung-Chih (see *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs*, 1868, Pt. I., 519-521) he advised him to treat Western nations as equals, for he could have no desire to arrogate to himself the sway over lands within the boundless oceans, or require that their ministers should render homage as did the Koreans and other tribes. He advised the emperor when he took the reins of government to grant them audience and to settle the presents and ceremonies to be followed at the time; "they, the envoys, need not be forced to do what is difficult. This course would best suit China's dignity and show its courtesy."

At six o'clock in the morning of the 29th of June the ministers of Russia, the United States, Great Britain, France and the Netherlands assembled at the "Fu Hua gate" in the wall that surrounds the Forbidden City, where they were met by one of the grand secretaries and several ministers. Here they left their chairs and escorts and were conducted on foot to the Shih-ying kung or "Palace of Seasonableness," a temple to the west of the Middle Lake in a remote corner of the palace grounds and near the Catholic cathedral known as Pei T'ang, and where the god of rain is worshipped by the emperor. They were shown into the imperial robing-room attached to the temple, where refreshments consisting of cakes, sweetmeats, fruits, and tea were served them; these refreshments the grand secretary was particular to inform them had been prepared in the imperial household, but this time no kotow was required before this "banquet." After waiting an hour or more the ministers were conducted to a large marquee on the west side of the neighboring reception hall, called the Tzū-kuang ko, or the "Hall of Purple Brightness," where Prince Kung, the president of the Foreign Office, and the rest of the ministers of the Ya-mên were waiting to receive them. This hall, by the way, is that in which the emperor entertains each year at a banquet the tributary Mongol princes who come to the capital to do him homage, and which has also in past times been used by the emperor as a grand stand from which to view archery contests or boat races on the lake stretching between it and the palace walls. Here the foreign envoys were again forced to wait a long time, the Chinese minister apologizing for the delay, saying that the emperor had received important despatches from the seat of war in Kashgaria that had detained him. Finally, the emperor having arrived and having taken his seat in the chair of state within the hall, the five foreign ministers were allowed to enter by the left-hand door of the hall, not by the central one which is reserved for the emperor alone. As they filed across the hall and came in front of the throne, they bowed to the emperor, and then advanced a few steps, when they bowed again and finally halted near the foot of the throne, bowing a third time. As soon as they had taken their places, the Russian minister read an address which the interpreter, standing behind them, translated into Chinese. When this was over all the ministers advanced one step and placed their credentials upon a yellow table at the foot of the throne, bowing once more as they did so. As the letters were laid upon the table the emperor leaned slightly forward as in acknowledgment of their reception, and Prince Kung, falling on his knees, was commanded by the emperor, who spoke in Manchu in a low voice, to inform the foreign ministers that their letters of credence

had been received. The prince then arose, descended the steps and, advancing a short distance towards the ministers, repeated what had been said to him. Then he reascended the platform and falling on his knees was again addressed by the emperor. On rising he once more came down the steps, advanced to the dean of the diplomatic body and said that His Majesty trusted that the emperor, kings and presidents of the states represented were in good health and hoped that all foreign affairs would be satisfactorily arranged between the Tsung-li Ya-mên and the foreign ministers. With this the audience ended, and the foreign ministers, retiring backwards, made three bows in the same manner as on entering the hall. They returned again for a short while to the Shih-ying kung, and were escorted back to the gate where they had left their sedan-chairs and foreign retinue, in the same manner as on their arrival; and so this memorable audience came to an end. There were, however, still further concessions to obtain from China, though of minor import; they were soon to be secured.

On the 12th of January, 1875, the emperor Tung-chih "departed on the long journey on the dragon chariot and became a guest on high." In 1888 his successor, the present reigning emperor, attained his majority and assumed personal control of the state. In the latter part of 1890 he issued a decree stating that he would receive the foreign diplomatic representatives for the purpose of their presenting their letters of credence, and that the audience would be held in like manner to that given in 1873.¹

Immediately the diplomatic corps held several conferences to determine what action should be taken in regard to the audience now offered them by the emperor, and what points they could gain, so as to make it conform more closely with Western precedents and usages. Long lists of points to be raised in discussing with the Chinese Foreign Office the details of the audience were drawn up, protocols, *aide-mémoires*, memoranda and notes were sealed, signed, delivered and—pigeon-holed. The outcome of two months of discussion was that on the 5th of March, 1891, the diplomatic representatives of ten of the treaty powers were received in the same out-of-the-way Tzū-kuang Ko, against which they had strenuously objected, and of which one of the foreign ministers had said,² that "it had rightly or wrongly a very bad name, and not only foreign, but also Chinese, public opinion had pointed to the use of that place as one of the principal reasons why the audience of 1873 had not been considered a success."

Exactly the same ceremonial was followed in introducing the

¹*Foreign Relations of the United States for 1891*, pp. 356 *et seq.*

²*Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1891, p. 384.

ministers to the reception hall as in 1873, and the same long hours of waiting ensued, just as in the days of Ismailoff in 1720 and of Low and his colleagues in 1873. The only material progress made was that instead of placing the letters of credence on a table at the foot of the imperial throne, as was done in 1873, they were placed by the president of the Chinese Foreign Office, *standing* and not kneeling, on a table so close to the emperor that he could take them in his hand if he chose to do so. And with this the envoys were "highly satisfied," and considered that "substantial progress had been made in the eighteen years that had elapsed since the last audience," and that what Mr. Low had said of the epoch-marking audience of 1873, that "their arduous and lengthy discussions had forced China to take a more important step in advance than she had ever done before, except when compelled by force of arms,"¹ was even truer of the audience of 1891.

As to the other concessions, that separate audiences were to be henceforth granted upon the arrival or departure of a minister, and general audiences to the whole diplomatic corps on stated occasions, these were more apparent than real; the principle of separate audiences had been fully acknowledged by China in 1873, when the Japanese ambassador and the French minister were received separately by the emperor, and also in 1874, when audiences were granted to several foreign diplomatic representatives, among others the United States minister, Mr. Benjamin P. Avery.² All this was now a matter of little importance to the Chinese, who, after a fight waged for at least ten centuries, had lost the only point worth contending for, when in 1873 they allowed the representatives of foreign powers to dispense with the time-honored kotow.

In the early part of 1894 several of the foreign ministers were received by the emperor in a hall specially built for the purpose and called the Cheng-kuang tien, though still outside the palace precincts; but on the 4th of November of the same year audience was finally promised them within the sacred precincts of the imperial palace (Ta nei), but only then as "an act of grace," that they might present to the emperor the letters of congratulation addressed to him by the various heads of foreign states on the sixtieth anniversary of the empress dowager. And with this concession the long, long fight was ended, the Westerners had scored a second and final victory, and the audience question was a thing of the past.³

WILLIAM WOODVILLE ROCKHILL.

¹*Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1891, p. 374 *et seq.*

²*Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1875, pp. 228-234.

³On the kotow question, see Léopold de Saussure, *La Chine et les Puissances occidentales*, Genève, 1894.